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ABSTRACT

This booklet for teachers reports what participants in the U.S. Department of Education's 1996 National Teacher Forum had to say about teacher leadership. Forum participants were 120 exemplary public and private school teachers nationwide. The report also includes thoughts of teachers who used e-mail to share their ideas on teacher leadership. After discussing why teacher leadership is important, the booklet examines forms of teacher leadership that forum participants identified: participating in professional teacher organizations; taking part in school decisions; defining what students need to know and be able to do; sharing ideas with colleagues; mentoring new teachers; helping make personnel decisions; improving facilities and technology; working with parents; creating various partnerships; becoming politically involved; and becoming leaders. They noted ways to support teacher leadership including: encouraging teachers to lead and stay informed; creating leadership roles for teachers; providing opportunities for teachers to continue learning; easing time commitments; and offering more connection opportunities. Participants suggested that teachers can get started moving into their leadership positions by identifying the need and by not waiting for someone else to make the change. The booklet provides a list of forum participants' names and addresses. (SM)

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TEACHERS LEADING THE WAY

Voices from the National Teacher Forum

U.S. Department of Education

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TEACHERS LEADING THE WAY

Voices from the National Teacher Forum

April 1998

U.S. Department of Education

Letter from the Secretary of Education

The Clinton Administration is committed to providing the best possible education for every child in America. Because that education depends on quality teachers, we have formed a partnership in order to tap the knowledge, experience and insight that teachers gain in the classroom. We are interested in helping teachers become partners in school reform rather than objects of that reform.

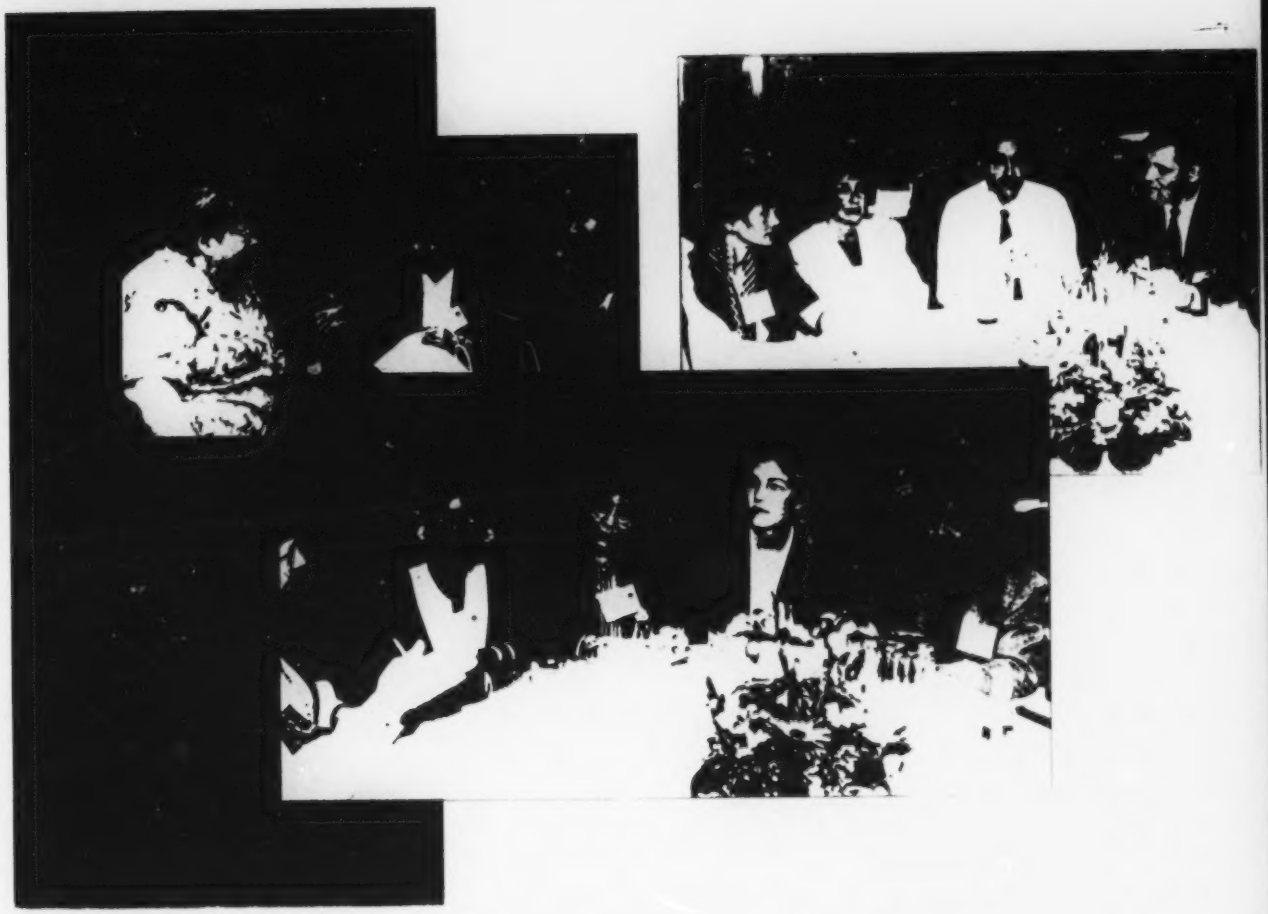
The 1996 Forum was the fourth time that the Department of Education hosted the National Teacher Forum. We invited a group of 120 exemplary public and private school teachers to Washington to discuss such questions as "Why is teacher leadership needed?" "What forms can teacher leadership take?", and "What steps can teachers take to become effective leaders?" We wanted to hear their thoughts and to explore ways in which the federal government can better listen to and support the critically important work of teachers. Each teacher was encouraged to consider ideas of leadership which they could take back into their schools, districts and states.

The National Teacher Forum is a necessary part of an ongoing dialogue between teachers and the Department. By supporting teachers as they become leaders, we are laying a foundation for them to become partners in local and state education efforts. **Teachers Leading the Way** reverberates with the voices of teachers as they talk about taking steps toward leadership. Their ideas and their thoughtful concerns are evidence of their commitment to the children of this country.

We can learn much from listening to teachers. I hope you enjoy hearing their voices.

Dick Riley

Richard W. Riley



New Roles for Teachers

"I'm most comfortable in my classroom, teaching with my children," says teacher Julie Ferriss of Mississippi, who echoes the sentiments of many colleagues. "If I could choose to be anywhere, that's where I would be. And 20 years ago, I could do that. I could leave the policy making to the policy makers and the administrating to the administrators, and parenting to the parents, and teaching to me. But it's just not like that anymore."

Traditionally, the work of American teachers has been centered solely in the classroom, helping children learn. Most of teachers' energy is still focused in the classroom. But, in recent years, the need to improve schools has called a growing number of teachers outside their traditional roles to help.

Today teachers are leading efforts to improve the curriculum and promote partnerships with other school districts and universities as well as with parents. They are serving on policymaking boards and testifying on school issues before state legislatures. They are leaders in setting high academic standards for students and in deciding how to help their students reach the standards. The list of leadership positions continues to grow as teachers begin to feel comfortable as education leaders outside of their classrooms.

Ferriss' words reflect the growing awareness of teachers who are learning the importance of teacher leadership.

Teacher Forum on Leadership

Why is teacher leadership needed? What forms can teacher leadership take? How can Americans support teacher leadership? What steps can teachers take to become effective leaders? One hundred twenty teachers came to Washington, D.C., to address these questions.

The 1996 National Teacher Forum was the fourth time that U.S. Department of Education officials have met with outstanding public and private school teachers to explore ways for the federal government to work with educators to achieve the eight National Education Goals. This forum, like those that came before it, was part of the Department's ongoing effort to listen to teachers.

This booklet is a document for teachers. It reports what forum participants had to say, as well as the thoughts of teachers throughout America who used e-mail and a web site to share their ideas on teacher leadership.

If you are a teacher . . .

We hope you will find in this booklet an idea for stepping forward in your own school or community—an idea that helps you push for a needed change that will improve learning for your students.

If you are an administrator or school board member, or a parent, a business person, or a citizen . . .

We hope you will find in this booklet some things you can do to encourage teachers to take the risks required to become leaders, and to support them when they do.

Why Teacher Leadership Is Needed

Teacher leadership is more important today than ever before because Americans expect more of schools and teachers. We expect teachers to teach for *understanding*, not just well enough for students to pass a test. Teaching for understanding means helping students "get the habit" of thinking mathematically, solving problems scientifically, reasoning historically and geographically, seeing artistically, reading critically, writing persuasively, and communicating clearly. We know that all students, not just a few, must acquire these habits if they are to participate as adults in a knowledge-based economy and a self-governing society.

These new expectations mean that our schools must change and that teachers must help change them, requiring new roles for teachers.

Today, teachers are being asked to...

make clear to parents and others, as well as to students themselves, what every student needs to know and be able to do;

communicate more with parents and families how they can help students reach higher academic standards;

integrate technology into instruction;

help improve assessments and use the results to improve teaching and learning;

work with various partners—colleges, businesses, community groups, and volunteers;

collaborate with other teachers;

participate in teams and school-level decision making; and

make ongoing learning part of their job.

Within a range of leadership roles, teachers can contribute a distinct perspective on American education that is critical to improving the quality of teaching and the amount that students learn. Teachers have front-line knowledge of classroom issues and the culture of schools, and they understand the support they need to do their jobs well.

Their contributions are critical to making education reform efforts succeed. When teachers participate in improving education, the changes are more likely to work. Without their contributions, teachers often pretend to comply with the new expectations, but conduct business as usual once the classroom door is closed.

Forms of Teacher Leadership

Forum participants identified many ways in which teachers can lead.

1. *Participating in professional teacher organizations.* Traditionally, being a teacher leader meant holding a position of influence in an organization or a union. For many teachers, these roles continue to be important. Many positions in these organizations have broadened in scope to provide opportunities for teachers to influence a wide range of policies.

   - While president of Wisconsin's science teachers' association, Sharon Nelson led efforts to develop and implement science education standards. She worked with the National Science Teachers Association, Goals 2000, and local teachers to bring copies of the national science education standards to her state. She also worked with Wisconsin's Department of Public Instruction to establish state science standards and have them implemented in Wisconsin's science classrooms.

2. *Taking part in school decisions.* Some teachers are working on teams with administrators to plan improvements within their schools.

   - "They go by many names—site-based management teams, school improvement teams... But their goal is the same—to expand the decision-making opportunities from the administrative team to the classroom teacher," Renee Higdon Coward from North Carolina explained. "What a valuable resource!! As a fledging teacher I saw the principal come to the veteran teachers on an informal basis to get their opinions on administrative and curricular decisions. The principal knew that the best way to determine how policy affects students was to ask the person who was most directly involved with students—the classroom teacher. I was very fortunate to have a forward-thinking principal who embraced the concept of site-based decision making.... Unfortunately, many school systems do not encourage this practice."

3. *Defining what students need to know and be able to do.* In many states and schools, teachers have developed academic standards and rewritten the curriculum and assessments to reflect the new standards.

   - Teachers took leadership roles on Delaware commissions established to make education improvements and write standards for a range of subjects, including math, science, social studies, and language arts. In each district, teachers were

later involved in rewriting the curriculum to be consistent with the new standards. Teachers also wrote and piloted new statewide assessments that were in line with the standards. Delaware teacher Jan Parsons reported, "This truly was a reform movement that began and continued with teachers.

4. *Sharing ideas with colleagues.* Some experienced teachers have developed and led professional development programs for their colleagues, aimed at helping them improve skills needed to help students reach high standards. Some successful professional development programs enable teachers to share ideas with one another.

   - Tom Howe's school in Wisconsin has a "Share Net Program" which allows teachers to share their best education practices. "We do this informally, all of us, as good teachers," Mr. Howe observed. "But we rarely sit down and take time to do it formally." Share Net participants write out their successes and make formal presentations. Within a week of Mr. Howe's Share Net presentation, a dozen or more teachers in his high school had begun using his ideas in their classrooms.

5. *Being a mentor to new teachers.* Veteran teachers provide critically needed support and advice to colleagues who are either new altogether to teaching or new to their area of teaching. For some inexperienced teachers, support from mentors has been key to their decision to remain teachers and to their professional competence.

   - "In 1973, when I first started teaching, a science teacher named Dick Reagan changed my life through mentorship," said Fie Budzinsky of Connecticut. "That was long before the word was popular. He spent every afternoon of every day, two to three hours, teaching me how to teach science. His support was invaluable. Today, 20 years later, I'm a mentor for the State of Connecticut."

6. *Helping to make personnel decisions.* In some districts, teachers are consulted in hiring new teachers and administrators.

   - Mary Ostwalt from Blowing Rock, North Carolina, served on a selection committee formed to replace a teacher who resigned. "The hiring of new faculty members is a tremendous responsibility, and the makeup of a faculty certainly affects school climate," she says. "The administrators send a strong message when giving teachers this responsibility. . . Teachers are also on the selection committee for the hiring of principals in our system."

7. Improving facilities and technology. Teachers have played important roles in improving education facilities.

- In Redmond, Oregon, teachers were the driving force behind a new $3.5 million technology facility. "We had a great team in Redmond," teacher Ray Hasart explained. "It took us five years to get it done. We had to sell it to the community and sell it to educators. We went and did all the Chamber meetings, all the Kiwanis meetings. . . The dog and pony show, our team called it. We used students to help us show off the curriculum. Right now we have one of the finest technology facilities in a comprehensive high school in the West, and we've had people from all over the West Coast come and visit."

8. Working with parents. Teachers encourage mothers, fathers, and other adults to be involved in schools as well as give ideas to better link schools and home.

- Martina Marquez has formed a team with fellow teachers in New Mexico to go into Indian villages and surrounding communities to speak with parents. "Many of our children are from (English) language-deficient homes, so we need to reach the parents," she explained. "We go out and do math and reading activities with the parents and say, 'Why don't you do this with your child at home?' There are kits we give out in the hospitals, which include a book and a little bib that says 'Read to Me' and a little brochure with activities that they can do with their children. If we don't start early, by the time they reach school it's already too late."

- Linda Gojak from Ohio works with parents to help them understand the school's math program and trains parents so that they can help their children learn math. She has also provided elementary school teachers who lack a strong math background with guidance on how to use the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) Curriculum Standards to reexamine and improve their teaching of math.

9. Creating partnerships with the community. Some teachers have worked with their communities to improve the schools.

- Scott Griffin from North Carolina spurred the overhaul of his community's fire safety program and volunteer fire department. "The volunteer fire department . . . was pretty much the joke of the community," he said. "They weren't very good at

putting out fires, and teachers began to complain and whine when volunteers visited our kindergarten—all they did was have the kids squirt water. There really was no fire safety program." To remedy this situation, Mr. Griffin joined the volunteer fire department and worked his way up through the system. Eventually he won the firemen's trust and worked with them to structure a training program which included the establishment of physical fitness standards. The firemen then got interested in how they could share their new knowledge with children, which led to a restructuring of the district's fire safety curriculum. Mr. Griffin's efforts had an unanticipated additional benefit—a partnership between the school district and volunteer firemen that stretched beyond fire safety. "When there was a project within the school that we needed help on, I didn't have to ask very much," Griffin noted. "I had a whole group of men and their wives who would come in and work with our school. . . I've found that by getting involved in my community, it's much easier to get my community involved back into my school."

10. *Creating partnerships with business and organizations.* Teachers take the lead in forming partnerships with businesses and other organizations. As outgrowths of these partnerships, schools and teachers gain everything from financial resources to business and other specialized expertise, and the businesses and organizations gain high school graduates who are better prepared for the workplace.

    - Stephanie Blakney was concerned that low-income students in her school in Georgia had few opportunities to go on field trips. "I took the phone book and started calling several businesses to tell them about our needs," she reported. These ranged from needing money to send students on field trips to basic necessities like food and clothing for her students. Her efforts lead to establishing the school system's Partnership with Education. As a part of this partnership, the Atlanta Coca-Cola Bottling Company "adopted" her school. "We had several kids whose houses were burned, or who did not have food, so together we started a food bank," she said. "Now we have a place to send parents and families in need. I am very proud of what we have accomplished."

11. *Creating partnerships with colleges and universities to prepare future teachers.* Experienced teachers help colleges and universities develop their teacher education curriculum and encourage teachers-in-training.

    - Christy McNally wished to share some of her teaching experiences with college students preparing to become teachers. So the former Kansas Teacher of the Year,

together with other award-winning teachers, organized a partnership with teacher education programs throughout Kansas. The partnership, now in its fourth year, has been a big hit. The present and future teachers have talked about the national education trends and issues and about teachers as leaders. They have talked about how much the profession expands beyond regular school hours and the schools and into the community. They have talked about the need to act professionally in order to gain community support and respect. "It's a kind of mini-teaching forum for future teachers in the college, and it's been wonderful," Ms. McNally said.

12. Becoming leaders in the community. Teachers lead community groups and organizations. By doing so teachers and their schools gain support; as residents get to know teachers and schools better, their confidence in them improves. Teachers who become involved in the community also come to understand it better, which helps them address the needs of their students more effectively.

- "I'm fortunate to live in a very, very rural state," Jacqueline Omland from Aberdeen, South Dakota reported. "I teach in the third largest school district in the state, and there are only 25,000 people in the town. In fact, we got on David Letterman for having two students in the graduating class in the town that's 30 miles away from us. So we have very, very small schools. Part of our evaluation as a teacher is community service—what we do in the community. So we have to take leadership roles in the community. This year, I'm the president of the Legion auxiliary, and the guy I teach with is the chairman of the Legion."

- Chip Brown from South Carolina recognizes the importance of having more teachers assume leadership roles in their communities. "If one can serve on the local city council, one should," he advised. "If one can serve on the Salvation Army board, one should. If teachers use lack of time as an excuse—valid as it may be—they will never be able to demonstrate the strength of their leadership in settings other than the schools. . . Teachers will have to seek out these roles and work to get them, because teachers will not, as a rule, be sought out."

13. Becoming politically involved. Teachers participate in the political process by running for and being elected to offices that range from state legislator to school board member. Other teachers have influenced education policy—for example, by testifying at their state legislatures, working on political campaigns, or serving on education advisory boards that report to their governor or their state department of education.

- Ivy Chan from Washington served one summer as treasurer in the campaign of a man running to become her state's Superintendent of Public Instruction. She was driven to do so because she objected vigorously to statements that her candidate's opponent made during the campaign. "I learned all kinds of things," Chan said. "This was a wealthy experience for me to take back to the classroom." The small downside to her foray into politics was that she committed so much time to it that her garden went neglected and, she chuckled, "My roses died."

- A South Carolina teacher, Kelly McCalla, described an important contribution that teachers can make to the political process. "Politicians want solutions. Teachers know how to state the problems. What teachers must do is learn how to state the problems in a language that politicians understand and that will lead to solutions. It is up to the teachers."

14. Leading efforts to make teachers more visible and communicate positive information. Many teachers aren't by nature self-promoters, so other educators, parents, policy makers and members of the community often aren't aware of teachers' abilities and accomplishments. Visibility is critical if teachers want their work to be recognized and if they want to take on leadership responsibilities outside the classroom.

- "In order for us to be viewed as leaders, we must be visible," said Annette Anderson from Washington, D.C. "We need to make use of the media. "I know as a teacher that there are great things happening in the District of Columbia Public Schools, but we never hear about these things. We need to focus on the positive, write articles to the newspaper, get involved with various public awareness programs to discuss what is happening in our particular area."

- Larry Torres started a weekly news column in his New Mexico community that reports all the good things that happen in education. His initial focus was on high school events and activities, but a wealth of contributions from elementary schools has enabled him to broaden the grade span of his reporting. His column evolved into a full page of information which runs each week. "One full page devoted to what is positive, what is right with the community—that is something that I'm very proud of," he said.

Supporting Teacher Leadership

Good teachers don't like to be out of their classrooms, but it is a myth that to be productive teachers must spend all of their time in the classroom. "I am lucky in that my school district supports my taking time outside the classroom," says Mark Saul of New York. "But I am always apologizing for leaving to go to another conference or meeting. Most are jealous of other teachers who assume leadership roles. . . It is ironic that even as we strive to find new ways to measure student growth which do not involve seat time in the classroom, we cling to the notion that a teacher is not working if he/she is not in the classroom."

To move beyond this notion and develop more leaders, many teachers need *support*—from other teachers as well as from outside the profession. Support to help more teachers become successful leaders can be given in many different ways.

1. *Encourage teachers to lead and show support.* Some teachers with great potential lack the confidence or skills to become successful leaders. Encouragement to make a presentation or head up a curriculum committee can help these teachers to become leaders. They also need to be encouraged to acquire research-based information that can guide them at the helm.

   - "A teacher's efforts to take on leadership roles outside the school need to be recognized and acknowledged as worthwhile, valuable, and appreciated," said Sharon Schwartz from Pennsylvania. "While it would be ideal to pay teachers for their time as leaders, even some public recognition and applause would go a long way to encouraging teachers to commit time in outside leadership roles. We need to support one another physically and emotionally. We need to help each other by sharing the work load for both our teaching duties and leadership activities. We need to work as teams in our school and in outside leadership roles. We need to be willing to share ideas and information, not hoard them as our own. And yes, we need to 'play' together, to build friendships and support for those among ourselves, so we have the strength and courage to keep going in leadership roles in the face of the inevitable challenges and disappointments along the way."

   - "Teachers need to believe they have something special to offer before they will become leaders. They need to believe that what they are doing is good enough to share with others," said Wyoming teacher Jan Truchot. "I don't know how many times something has been going on in our building and somebody has come up with an idea. Then all of a sudden it will come out in an education journal as this most

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wonderful thing in the world. And, we all say, 'Well, we've been doing that for five years.' We don't recognize, all of us, that what we are doing is really neat stuff."

- "You've got to get teachers out of the box that they are in," said David Williams from Florida. As a department chairman, Mr. Williams encourages some colleagues to teach more advanced classes than they previously have. He believes this is a small but important step toward increasing their confidence and capacity to lead.

- Teachers with an eye toward becoming leaders need to be encouraged to expand their knowledge and understanding of education and how children learn, according to Forum participants. This is critical in order for the teacher leaders to move schools in directions that are educationally sound. Fie Budzinsky from Connecticut explained, "A lot of our teachers are well-intentioned, but are really not grounded in evidence. We don't read enough. I'm not saying that all the answers are in reading, but there is a lot of research on learning in the last 20 years that is profound, and I don't think we speak from that knowledge base. Until the leaders know more and can actually ground some of what they say in some sort of evidence, I think we will always have a credibility problem, and our leadership will be questioned."

2. *Create leadership roles for teachers.* More ways must be found to provide leadership roles for teachers that enable them to remain in the classroom.

   - "Typically in a school district if you're a really good teacher they want to make you the principal. And, you know, that's not where some of us want to go," said Edward Barry from Vermont. "But there's nowhere else to go. We need to create other roles that are recognized and maybe monetarily recognized."

   - "I want a half-and-half job," said Cynthia Appold from New York. "I want to continue my teaching because I love it, but I want to be a liaison to a lot of community things. I want to be able to work with companies that are going to benefit my students or help other students."

   - Barbara Ellison Rosenblit from Georgia recommends having more "master teachers" who assume extra responsibilities such as working with less experienced teachers. A master teacher program can provide veteran teachers with important opportunities to "show their stuff to everybody" and receive recognition that extends beyond accolades at faculty meetings, she said.

- For the last three years, Steven Levy has successfully shared his class with other teachers. This arrangement enabled him to remain a teacher *and* pursue other education interests and talents developed during his time as the 1993 Massachusetts Teacher of the Year. For one year, he paired up with a beginning teacher who had previously been his student teacher. "This worked well because we were very familiar with each other's style and with the traditions, ceremonies, enthusiasms, and procedures of classroom life," Levy said. Both beginning and veteran teacher gained from the partnership, Levy said. The beginning teacher learned that some challenges were beyond her ability to influence; it was not her responsibility to fix all of her students' learning, emotional, and social problems. "On the other hand," Levy reports, "her passion to solve every problem pushed this old man to reconsider taking on some battles that he had long given up on." When that teacher left to become a mother, Levy hooked up with a former education consultant who was eager to teach. "It is fantastic for me to work with this person who is so knowledgeable about the research, and strong in areas where I am weak," Levy said. "It is also great for her to test ideas that sounded great in the lab with real children!" Both he and his current partner do consulting and writing when they aren't teaching, and Levy also works for an education reform initiative sponsored by the New American Schools called ATLAS Communities. "Teachers need the opportunity to work with adults, reflecting on their practice and sharing it with others for development and critique," Levy said. "I encourage any of you great teachers who feel limited by the classroom, but would never want to leave it, to consider a job-sharing arrangement."

- Teachers who are willing to serve should be paid . . to spend half their time teaching in their classrooms and the other half serving in their leadership role," Merlinda Rodriguez from Texas suggested. "The preparation and planning time for these jobs should also be compensated. Also, resources . . . that enable teacher leaders to do their jobs more efficiently and creatively should be provided."

3. *Provide opportunities for teachers to continue learning and be trained as leaders.* Professional development is essential if teachers are to gain the knowledge and skills needed to be leaders. Many forum teachers suggested that partnerships be formed with teacher preparation programs to improve their content and help teachers-in-training develop leadership skills. Forum teachers also suggested that classroom teachers have regular opportunities to attend professional development sessions to improve their leadership skills.

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- "We keep talking about teachers being leaders, but who is *training* us to be leaders?" Eva Thompson of Alabama asked. "I know that I should be a leader. But in our schools of education they do not instill that in us, to go out, be a leader. We don't get any background. In the ideal world, our universities, our colleges of education, need to help us get into jobs as leaders."

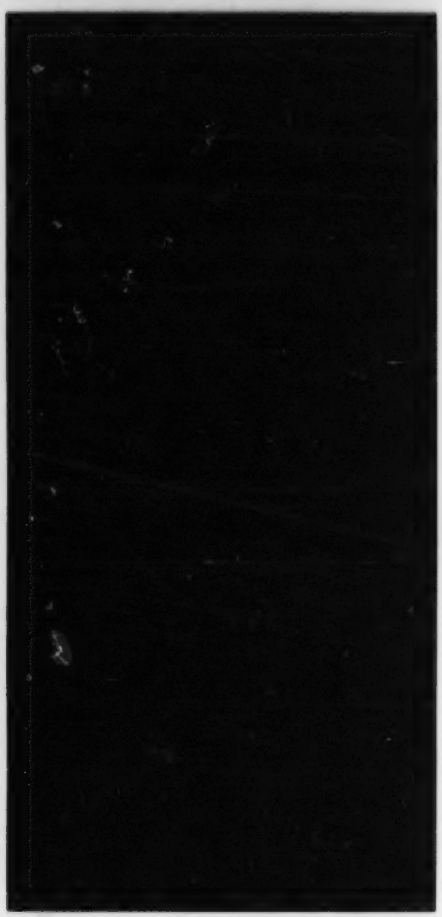
- "Our district has only 77 teachers and about 1,200 students. But our building principal really encourages our teachers to go to conferences, to become experts, and our district has 11 in-service days," said Gene Stukel from Minnesota. "These are *not* workshops. It's very menu-driven. The presenting is done by the 77 teachers in our district. Out staff development committee and I work together to determine maybe six or seven offerings, and teachers sign up. At the end, we have a survey to ask people what we could do for the next in-service. We've been doing this for nine years, and it's been just incredible."

- Classroom teachers can help improve local teacher education programs, Kelly McCalla from South Carolina suggested. "They don't ask what we think (teachers) should be learning," she said. "Too many universities are still teaching the same things they did 10 years ago. Why can't we be in their meetings, and design their course syllabus?"

- "We all know that the best lessons that we teach to children are those in which we have a personal stake or personal interest," said Leonard Swanton from Massachusetts. This reality is behind some of the success of the Fulbright-Hays fellowships, which allow teachers to travel to different corners of the world. At the end of about seven weeks of travel, teachers are expected to develop a curriculum or a project to share with other teachers.

- Leadership training similar to what Scott Griffin and his colleagues have developed could benefit many teachers. Mr. Griffin and several other teachers who were finalists for the North Carolina Teacher of the Year have established a leadership institute that enables teachers to receive leadership training. Among other things, these teachers learn about their own leadership style and how to make the best use of their attributes.

- More reliable and competent substitute teachers are needed to step in while regular teachers receive training. "If you go on a three-day conference for teachers, the third day the sense of worry begins to set in," Kelly McCalla explained. "What's



my little (class)room look like? What if my kids don't want to come (to school)?" Having the same teacher or teachers substitute for a regular teacher leaving for leadership training would make the instructional time more productive, she said.

4. *Ease time constraints.* Many teachers describe a lack of time as the greatest challenge to increasing the number of teachers in leadership roles. Time for leadership activities must be built into a teacher's schedule so that they don't need to carry a full class load and also squeeze in time to lead during their planning time or hours outside the classroom. Forum teachers suggested constructive ways to restructure time and juggle their professional and personal responsibilities.

   - The teacher's day and work load need to be adjusted to allow for other involvements, many Forum teachers suggested. "The outside involvements need to be viewed as part of the teacher's job—not as extra work on his/her own time," says Sharon Schwartz from Pennsylvania.

   - "Twelve-month teaching contracts would give teachers more time to become leaders," said Edward Barry from Vermont. Part of that contract time would be for planning, part for professional development, and part for teaching.

   - More family-friendly policies would give teachers more time to lead, Melody Fawcett-Leech from Ohio recommended. "Schools seldom make concessions for people with small children," she said. Evening open houses, meetings with parents, or after-school athletic activities become a major scheduling challenge because her husband must be available to watch the children or she or her husband must find a sitter. On-site child care and/or other such supports would make it much easier to take on leadership responsibilities and other professional commitments outside the classroom, she said.

   - Teachers need to select carefully the activities that they become involved in outside the classroom. "You really have to pick and choose," Alan Taylor of the Northern Mariana Islands advised. "Find some things that you really do well, and focus on those things, because you just can't do it all."

5. *Create more 'connection' opportunities.* Teachers would benefit from more time to talk with each other and with the community. Most teachers have informal opportunities to talk in teachers' meetings or in hallways between classes. But more organized efforts to

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get together would help break down the professional isolation inherent in teaching, an isolation that can hamper the ability of teachers to build the knowledge and confidence needed to become leaders.

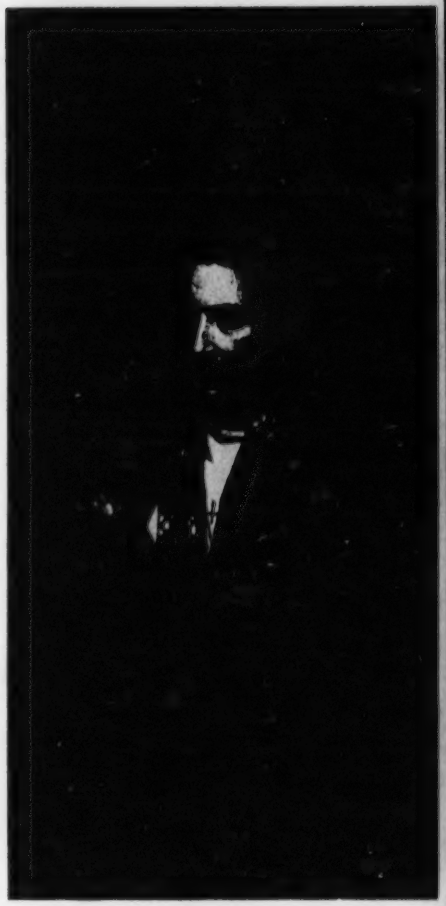
- Opportunities to connect also help broaden teachers' perspectives and provide them with the context needed for being effective in their classrooms. As one forum teacher explained, "It is counterproductive for teachers to be hired, disappear into their classroom, and reappear 27 years later for their retirement party."

- "There is so much isolation," explained Shelley Lawrence from California. "We need to find ways to make time for teachers to get together and to talk—to see what's happening in other classrooms, to really identify who the experts are in my school, at other schools in the community."

- Teachers could benefit from "a common preparation period, more peer support and interaction," said Sam D. Hasselman from New Jersey. "In teaching with our peers, we rarely get to bond. We hold court in our own rooms, have a common teachers' meeting once a month, and shuffle home to do papers."

- Connecting with people and groups outside the classroom is particularly important in small districts so that resources for students can be increased, according to Steve Hornyak. He has relied on a range of contacts to produce musical and theatrical productions in Eaton, Colorado. Teachers in local colleges, retired teachers, parents, art advocacy groups, dance instructors in the community, and other arts professionals have helped with everything from sewing costumes, to choreographing productions.

- Teachers need to make time for people and activities outside the world of teaching, according to Judy Woytowich of Guam. "Teachers need a life," she said. "They need a passion outside of the classroom. When teachers have exciting lives that enrich humanity and themselves, they bring that energy into the classroom, and it kindles fire in budding firemen, scientists, doctors, writers, naturalists, future teachers, and parents... Whenever I get unhappy with my role as an educator, I say, 'Judy, you need a life. Go get a life!' Ms. Woytowich writes, reads, and plays racquetball. She has visited Alaska to work on her brother's boat and to see glaciers, whales, eagles, and seals. She's studied photography. "The enthusiasm I garner from the life outside the classroom reenters the classroom with me and helps motivate students," she concludes.



Getting Started

Teachers need support to move into leadership positions, but at the same time they can take steps to become leaders and initiate changes. So how can they get started? First, they need to *identify a change that's needed* in their school district, school, or classroom. Second, teachers can *stop waiting* for someone else to make this change and move ahead on their own.

Identify a Need

- Teachers often become leaders after recognizing a need and committing themselves to taking action. The needs for change can vary greatly from community to community, from school to school, and from classroom to classroom.

- John Funk and other teachers in Salt Lake City, Utah recognized that their district's kindergarten program was not developmentally appropriate. Among other things, it was long on worksheets and short on providing students with hands-on opportunities to learn. So the teachers went first to the district's kindergarten teacher leader to voice concerns. This did not produce any results. Fortunately, as the teachers were voicing concerns, the district replaced the early childhood leader. The new teacher leader, along with the concerned group of teachers, went to the assistant superintendent over elementary school instruction and then to the school board, which deliberated and agreed to support changes. The district's kindergarten program is now regarded as a model within Utah; observers have come from six hours away to learn about it.

- Billie Hicklin and fellow teachers in Boone, North Carolina, were unhappy with the proposed school day calendar, which lacked sufficient time to plan classroom activities or schedule staff development sessions. So they lobbied their school board for a change. "The details of our presentation to the board were planned when we realized how little many members knew about the job of teachers," she said. "They are rarely in our schools, and most (80 percent) have no education background." During their 10 to 12-minute presentation, teachers: (1) gave introductions and a positive list of reasons why teachers stay in teaching; (2) walked board members through the steps of planning a lesson; (3) talked about what happens in the classroom (for example, coaching, monitoring, guiding, listening, probing, and problem-solving); (4) described the non-instructional duties that take time away from classroom instruction; and (5) talked about teachers' extracurricular activities that are meaningful to students (for example, supervising clubs and competitions and chaperoning dances). Following this presentation, the teachers asked for improvements to their calendar, including 5 half-days when

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students would be let out of school early to allow time for planning and staff development. In the discussion that followed, Ms. Hicklin said, "One board member admitted that he thought all teachers did for planning was to look at the next chapter in a book!" Their efforts paid off—the teachers "got the calendar we wanted because teachers all over the country spoke out," Ms. Hicklin said.

- Judy Prescott from Arizona recognized that she and a colleague across the hall faced similar teaching challenges and shared a need for more appropriate learning materials for their hearing-impaired high school students, who were college-bound but reading at a first or second-grade level. So the two paired up to create materials that would suit their students' needs. "We started writing our own series of books and stories, and rewriting fairy tales and everything that we could get our hands on," Ms. Prescott said. "We rewrote Shakespeare and Poe." The two arranged to have their books published, which lead to opportunities for them to speak to organizations throughout Canada and the United States about the importance of language and individualized instruction.

- A group of South Carolina teachers saw the need to change a major bill that aimed to boost student achievement by making teachers more accountable for the education of their students. South Carolina teachers have long struggled with how best to boost test scores on the SAT and other nationally normed tests, which are among the lowest in the nation. "We all are tired of the embarrassment of (the low test score rankings) and continually work hard to have this status leave us," teacher Debra Templin reported. But many South Carolina teachers including Templin were disturbed by benchmarks imposed in the original version of the state's Accountability Bill of 1996. Among other things, the 20-page bill: (1) called for 95 percent of the state's students tested in the year 2001 to meet the national average SAT and ACT score for the previous year, and (2) would have removed the principal of any school not meeting designated benchmarks for the third consecutive year and would have prohibited that person from seeking any administrative position within the school district.

As chairperson of the South Carolina Teacher Forum, Ms. Templin orchestrated efforts to revise the bill, which included a major letter-writing campaign and many meetings with key players. The new bill, among other things, called for an assessment system that measured each student's achievement from one year to the next. The South Carolina Teacher Forum also suggested that each district use portfolios and other assessment techniques now thought to provide a better handle on student achievement. "I know beyond a shadow of a doubt that Teacher Forum participants made the

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Legislators change the original bill," Templin said. "They thought they could slide it by us, but as one legislator told me, 'I have been receiving 45 letters a day from teachers.' He said it was unbelievable."

- A North Dakota teacher, Curt Leslie, saw a need for teachers and students to make better links between what they taught or learned in class and what goes on in the "outside" world. So Mr. Leslie applied for and received a $7,000 grant to start a program at his school that allows teachers to participate in "externships" in area businesses. All too often, Mr. Leslie said, students didn't connect what they learned in math or in art with the working world or their lives beyond school, and teachers often had trouble helping their students make the connections because 85 percent of North Dakota teachers have never held a job other than teaching. Teachers in externships were required to learn about the businesses and write up a lesson plan incorporating information about how the business fit into the teachers' area of expertise. The grant money paid for substitute teachers while the regular teachers were at the businesses, as well as for teachers' travel time, and a little stipend.

- Ann Brock recognized the need to encourage and reward students with outstanding academic achievements. Students excelling in sports often received more recognition than those with high grades, she realized. So she and fellow teachers asked each area business to donate $40 to provide students who excelled academically with a sweater with an academic letter on it. Students with a range of academic inclinations, from those in classes for the gifted and talented to those in special education classes, received academic letters. "It was a big deal," Ms. Brock reported. Teachers then invited parents, businesses, and students to attend the awards ceremony in the high school gym. Since its inception the program has evolved to award trophies instead of letters for academic excellence.

- Michigan teacher Diane Sheperd recognized the need to support hearing-impaired youth at risk of abusing drugs. With a grant from the Detroit mayor's office, she began a program that provides drug prevention workshops and job skills training for these young people. The program is called Project HIYARDS, which is an acronym for Hearing-Impaired Youth at Risk for Drugs and Other Substances. The program also helps educate employers who are reluctant to hire hearing-impaired youth because they don't understand sign language. "We try to let the students know there's another way to make money, other than being out there selling drugs," Ms. Sheperd said. "We helped employers understand that these youngsters are employable, and they're

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excellent workers."

- Cynthia Appold's first leadership efforts occurred about 12 years ago when she proposed to the local board of education that it provide $20,000 for 10 computers for a computer graphics class. Ms. Appold, from New York, saw computers in science, math, and business classes, but none in her art department. Without computers, she said, "I wasn't educating my students for the future, and that was very important to me." In the last decade she has lectured and led workshops to build up the computer graphics program in her school and was delighted when the first 10 computers were recently replaced with more powerful ones.

- "When you need money or other resources for a project, don't be bashful about calling people," advises Bill Martin from Alabama. "I'm not opposed at all to picking up the phone and saying, 'Hey, this is Bill. I am over at the school, and we really need this.' Sometimes I say, 'Mr. Kelly down at the bank has given us $500 for this. Would you be interested in matching that?' You pick up the phone and call, and people usually will help."

- William Bratberg from Missouri also doesn't hesitate to ask for what he needs to be a good teacher. "I just wonder how many teachers have ever said, 'This is what I really need to be able to do my job,'" said Mr. Bratberg. "I guess I'm not afraid to ask for stuff. Sometimes, I get strange looks, but if you never ask for something, how does anyone know you need it? You need to let people know what you need. I think you can do that in a professional manner."

- When Jeffrey Carter moved from a school in New York City to one in Prince George's County, Maryland, he felt that the curriculum in his new school was outdated in its depiction of blacks, Hispanics, and women. "I felt that I had a choice," he said. "I could go along with the usual line, or I could try to agitate and get some changes. I got a lot of static from my colleagues, who said basically, 'If you don't like the way things are going, go back up to New York.' But I kept with it, and I was subsequently named to a year-long, district-wide committee to revise the K-12 curriculum. By the time we got through, we had all sorts of people in the curriculum who reflected the multi cultural nature of the country. It was a very fair curriculum, but we didn't stop there. We made sure that the curriculum was implemented in the schools. As I said, I could have gone along the way things were, but I chose not to. I wanted to make sure that I tried to find a solution to the problem."

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- "I found out that no one was representing our remote district at state-level mathematics curriculum meetings, so I volunteered to attend," Diana Suddreth from Utah said. "Since that time I've been attending regularly, bringing information back to our district, and providing leadership in making curriculum reforms. I've helped set up in-service opportunities and met regularly with other math teachers to pass on information from the state level. Since I've had a chance to meet a lot of people, I've also been influential in supporting reform efforts throughout the district."

- Steven Levy was concerned about the dearth of opportunities for teachers in his Massachusetts school to talk about teaching and learning. "Our teacher meetings were always business," he said. "Although everyone always agreed it would be great if we had time to talk to each other about what was happening in our classrooms, there was simply no time for this." So Levy joined with other teachers to create a schoolwide Faculty Forum. "I think there is no power as encouraging or transforming as teachers meeting regularly to discuss their work," Levy said. Every two weeks anywhere from 3 to 12 teachers met in a different classroom after school. Each meeting had four parts. First, the host teacher would show participants his or her room and describe what she was doing with her students. Second, the teachers shared anecdotes, each of which raised issues relevant to the participants. "The challenge was to find stories that somehow spoke of something bigger than themselves, that illustrated issues we all face," Levy said. Third, the teachers discussed an article that all the teachers had read the week before, or a principle they had previously agreed was relevant to their teaching. Finally, participants discussed ways that they could apply that principle to their work. The Forum met for three years. "We even got a small grant, which we used to buy refreshments and to hire substitutes so we could visit each other's classes," Levy said. "It was interesting how the grant gave our group a certain legitimacy."

Stop Waiting

Once a need for change has been identified, it is time to take action. Stalling lessens the possibility that reform goals will be reached. Waiting for someone else to take the critical first steps also contributes to the stereotype of teachers being too passive to lead effectively.

Forum participants acknowledged the resistance of some teachers to taking action.

- "We all tend to sit back and say, 'Someone needs to address that,' said Jeff White from Georgia. "We forget that the very middle word in 'someone' is 'me.'"

- "As a profession we are insecure," Jill Olsen-Virlee from Iowa explained. "We wait for researchers. We wait for somebody to tell us what we intuitively know is right. We wait for somebody to say it's okay that we do it. It has been very hard for us as a profession to take risks because of the pervasive culture (which provides limited support for teachers who take action)."

- "I have to volunteer. I have to look for opportunities," said Ann Brock from Texas. "If you wait till you are asked, you will not ever be asked, because people don't know that you are interested."

- Frustration fuels some teachers' drive to action. "A lot of teacher leadership starts with the natural pressure that all teachers face," said Edward Silver from Maryland. "You hit that level of frustration when something's going on in your classroom and you ask yourself, 'How can we do something differently? Why can't this happen?' Then you hit a fork in the road, and either you're going to gripe about it, or you're going to do something about it."

- "For 30 of my 38 years of teaching, I believed my only role was to be the best teacher I could be," recalled George Beyer, who retired recently but remains actively involved in Montana's schools. Mounting concerns with the slow pace of reform nudged him into the leadership limelight. In recent years he's been involved in everything from fund-raising to lobbying legislators. And like many teachers who have assumed leadership roles, today he's convinced that he contributes most by maintaining a balance of education responsibilities inside *and* outside the classroom.

Conclusion

Today Americans want all students to reach high levels of academic performance, a goal that calls for the participation of everyone involved in educating children, including teachers. The fourth U.S. Department of Education Teacher Forum was held to find out what teachers can do to lead the way and what can be done to support them.

Teachers possess many leadership talents that, if put to use, can improve American education. Robert Maurais from Maine said:

> Every teacher brings one unique aspect of being into his or her classroom and his school. Whatever it is that you love to do, you need to take that and run with it. Mine's technology—weather satellites, amateur radio, computer aviation, aerospace. When I talk to young teachers—and I support a number of student teachers—I say, 'Find one thing that you really love to do, then do it with a passion, and do it the best that you can. People are going to flock to you because they know that you're really passionate about that one thing. If everyone in your building did that, it would make a big difference.'

For many years we have honored the contribution of teachers to our society through awards. But as Terry Dozier, former National Teacher of the Year and teacher adviser to Secretary of Education Richard Riley explained to Forum participants, the greatest honor we can bestow upon a teacher is not a title like "Teacher of the Year," but acknowledging and using his or her expertise to improve American education.

Teachers need opportunities to share their knowledge with other educators, policy makers, and the general public. Teachers must also be treated as equal partners, as individuals worthy of dignity and respect who come to the table with a voice that must be heard in order to improve teaching and learning.

When Americans listen to this voice, the impact of teachers can reverberate throughout districts, schools, and classrooms. Leadership opportunities move teachers beyond the structured isolation of their profession and broaden their perspectives.

No one benefits more from teaching leadership than America's children. Jeff White from Georgia explained, "We sometimes forget that the reason we become teacher leaders outside the classroom is that it will make a difference inside the classroom." This benefit alone makes efforts to support teacher leadership worthwhile.

1996 Forum Participants

ALABAMA

Eva Thompson
Monrovia School
Huntsville, AL

Bill Martin
Fort Payne Middle School
Fort Payne, AL

ALASKA

Mardene Collins
Colony Middle School
Palmer, AK

Barbara Mitchell
Gastineau Elementary School
Juneau, AK

ARIZONA

Judy Paris
Del Rio Elementary
Chino Valley, AZ

Eileen Stanek
Challenger Middle School
Glendale, AZ

ARKANSAS

Phyllis Orlicek
Stuttgart High School
Stuttgart, AR

Patricia Harris
Bryant Middle School
Bryant, AR

CALIFORNIA

Kathleen Byrnes
Marin County Office of Ed
San Rafael, CA

Javier Gonzalez
Pioneer High School
Whittier, CA

Shelly Lawrence
Sinai Akiba Academy
Los Angeles, CA

COLORADO

Yvonne Walker
Escalante Middle School
Durango, CO

Grace Carr
St. Mary's Academy
Englewood, CO

Steve Hornyak
Eaton High School
Eaton, CO

CONNECTICUT

Fie Budzinsky
Portland High School
Portland, CT

Robert Berwick
New Canaan Country School
New Canaan, CT

Karen Ernst
King's Highway
Westport, CT

DELAWARE

Ted Ammann
Hartley Elementary School
Hartley, DE

Darryl Hudson
Sussex Central Middle
Millsboro, DE

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

Christine Cole
Shape American High School
APO, AE

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Sandra Dobson
Barnard Elementary
Washinton, D.C.

Annette McKenzie Anderson
Mamie D. Lee
Washington, D.C.

FLORIDA

David Williams
Suncoast Community High
Riveria Beach, FL

Ray Ramirez
Southern Oaks Middle School
Port St. Lucie, FL

GEORGIA

Ann Thomas
Fifth Avenue School
Decatur, GA

Jeff White
Berkmar High School
Lilburn, GA

Barbara Ellison Rosenbilt
The Epstein School
Atlanta, GA

GUAM
Judy Woytowich
Inarajan Middle School
Agana, Guam

Randolph Gallman
Asamuyaut Community School
Tamuning, GU

HAWAII

Michael Nakasone
Pearl City High School
Pearl City, HI

Renee Morris
Waianae Intermediate
Waianae, HI

IDAHO

Jennifer Lance Williams
Mountain Home High School
Mountain Home, ID

Kit Bennett
Almo Elementary School
Almo, ID

ILLINOIS

Terry Nourie
Glenn Elementary School
Normal, IL

Barry Fagg
Immanuel Lutheran School
Dundee, IL

Barbara Allen
Harrisburg High School
Harrisburg, IL

INDIANA

Dan Durban
F.J. Reitz high School
Evansville, IN

Caryn Ellison
Twin Branch Elementary
Mishawaka, IN

IOWA

Jill Olsen Virlee
Marion High School
Marion, IA

Jill Anderson
Norwalk Middle School
Norwalk, IA

KANSAS

Christy McNally
Saint Mary's Elementary
Pittsburg, KS

Mary Lee Edwards
Yates Center High School
Yates Center, KS

KENTUCKY

Elizabeth Lewis
Wheeler Elementary
Louisville, KY

Mary Beth Dunn
Shelby County Middle School
Jeffersontown, KY

LOUISIANA

Ronald Cormier
Belle Place Middle School
New Iberia, LA

Sally Cox
A.C. Steere Elementary
Shreveport

MAINE

Dorothy Smith
Caribou High School
Caribou, ME

Bob Maurais
Frank H. Harrison Middle
Yarmouth, ME

MARYLAND

Edward Silver
Rock Hall Elementary
Rock Hall, MD

Jeffrey Carter
Violetville Middle School
Columbia, MD

MASSACHUSETTS

Leonard Swanton
Estabrook Elementary School
Lexington, MA

Kathleen Sherman
East Falmouth Elementary
Falmouth, MA

MICHIGAN

Sharon Green
Graveraet Middle School
Marquette, MI

Diane Shepard
Crockett Career Technical
Detroit, MI

MINNESOTA

Mary Beth Biegen
Worthington Senior High
Worthington, MN

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Gene Stukel
Yellow Medicine East School
Granite Falls, MN

MISSISSIPPI

Julie Allen Ferriss
Webster Elementary
Yazoo City, MS

Cathy Stewart
Lafayette Elementary
Oxford MS

MISSOURI

William Brathery
Farmington R-7 Schools
Farmington, MO

Beth Wehling
Nipher Middle School
Kirkwood, MO

MONTANA

Carol Beyer-Ward
Kalispell Jr. High School
Kalispell, MT

George Beyer
Flathead High School
Kalispell, MT

NEBRASKA

DeEtta Merritt
Lincoln Northeast High
Lincoln, NE

Jean LaGrone
Westgate Elementary
Omaha, NE

Robert Bruner
St. Paul Lutheran School
Utica, NE

NEVADA

Paula Naegle
Chaparral High School
Las Vegas, NV

Patricia Rowe
Lovelock Elementary
Lovelock, NV

NEW HAMPSHIRE

Deborah Woolflein
Merrimack High School
Merrimack, NH

Cindy Linehan
Smyth Road School
Manchester, NH

NEW JERSEY

Janis Jensen
Ho-Ho-Kus Public Schools
Ho-Ho-Kus, NJ

Richard Ruffalo
Belleville High School
Belleville, NJ

NEW MEXICO

Martina Marquez
Mt. Taylor Elementary
Grants, NM

Larry Torres
Taos High School
Taos, NM

NEW YORK

Brenda Hunter
Claremont Elementary
Ossining, NY

Cynthia Appold
Hicksville High School
Hicksville, NY

NORTH CAROLINA

Scott Griffin
Ida Rankin Elementary
Mount Holly, NC

Barbara Bailey-Smith
Little River School
Durham, NC

NORTH DAKOTA

Curt Leslie
Kindred Public School
Kindred, ND

Marcia Kenyon
Eastwood Elementary
West Fargo, ND

NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS

Alan Taylor
San Vincente Elementary
Saipan, MP

OHIO

Cathy Priest
Coshocton High School
Coshocton, OH

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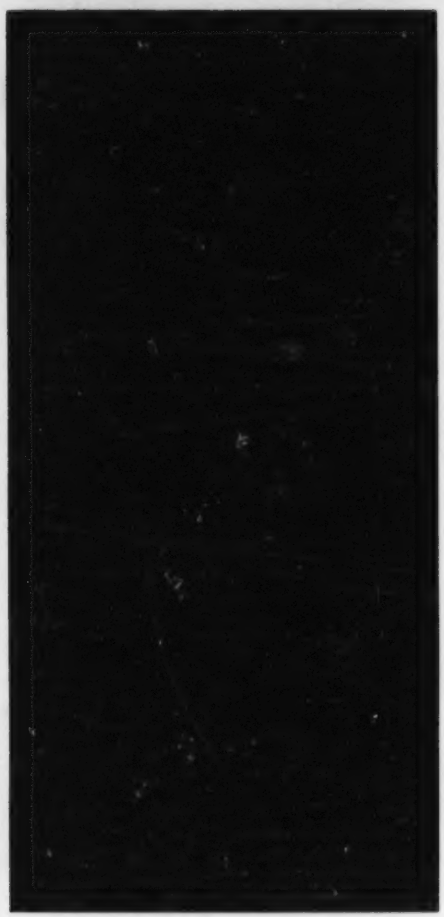

Melody Fawcett Tawch
Stephen E. Howe Elementary
Cleveland, OH

OKLAHOMA

Vivian Nida
Putnam City North High
Oklahoma City, OK

Elizabeth Loflies
St. Charles Borromeo
Oklahoma City, OK

Stephen Smallwood
Broken Bow High School
Broken Bow, OK

OREGON

Ray Hasart
Redmond High School
Redmond, OR

Vicky Jones
Ontario Middle School
Ontario, OR

PENNSYLVANIA

Susan Rodriguez
Overbrook Education Center
Philadelphia, PA

Cathy Trombetta
Jefferson School
Clairton, PA

PUERTO RICO

Luz Viera Maldonado
Santiago Torres Jr. High
Las Piedras, PR

Justino Gonzalez
Republica de Costa Rica
Caguas, PR

Irene Cabrer
Corrego Maria Auxiliadora
Carolina, PR

RHODE ISLAND

Mary Kay Schwarz
Nathan Bishop Middle
Providence, RI

Donna MacLeod
Smithfield High School
Smithfield, RI

SOUTH CAROLINA

Barbara Weston
Five Points School
Columbia, SC

Kelly McCalla
Oakland Elementary
Greenwood, SC

SOUTH DAKOTA

Carolyn Riter
Stanley County Elementary
Ft. Pierre, SD

Jacqueline Ormland
Aberdeen Central High
Aberdeen, SD

TENNESSEE

Linda Cheek
Ingleside Elementary
Athens, TN

Donna Parker
Obion County Central High
Troy, TN

TEXAS

Ann Brock
Frazier Elementary
Burleson, TX

Sue Baker
Whitesboro Middle School
Whitesboro, TX

UTAH

John Funk
Fox Hills Elementary
Salt Lake City, UT

Anne Butler
Mount Logan Middle School
Logan, UT

VERMONT

Edward Barry
School Street School
Milton, VT

Ed Lewis
Cabot School
Cabot, VT

VIRGIN ISLANDS

Nadia Tolentino
Evelyn M. Williams
Elementary
Christiansted, St. Croix

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VIRGINIA

Barbara Rivers Honeycutt
Venable Elementary School
Charlottesville, VA

Elizabeth Crabtree
Clark Elementary
Charlottesville, VA

WASHINGTON

Ivanelle Chan
Garfield Elementary
Olympia, WA

Dianna Galante
Whole Earth Montessori
Bothell, WA

Patricia Cygan
Nathan Hale High School
Seattle, WA

Mary Schneider
Woodinville Montessori
Woodinville, WA

WEST VIRGINIA

David Anderson
Elk Elementary School
Charleston, WV

JoAnn Harman
Petersburg High School
Petersburg, WV

WISCONSIN

Thomas Howe
Monona Grove High School
Monona, WI

Sharon Nelson
Waunakee High School
Waunakee, WI

WYOMING

Pamela Moore
Aspen Elementary
Evanston, WY

Jan Truchot
Sundance Elementary
Sundance, WY

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